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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [VE](#)
SUBJECT: CHAVEZ PRESSING AHEAD WITH A SINGLE
"REVOLUTIONARY" PARTY

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Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR ROBERT DOWNES,
REASON 1.4 (D)

11. (C) Summary. President Chavez has announced that his intention to form a single "revolutionary" party early in 2007 is firm, although he has not yet specified exactly when or how he plans to form the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV). Chavez and other leaders of the ruling Fifth Republic Movement (MVR) are suggesting that the party will be built upon Chavez' nation-wide election campaign structure and will inject more ideology and party discipline up and down the ranks of Chavez' supporters. As a first step toward this process, Chavez' MVR party dissolved on December 18, and numerous small pro-Chavez parties have already followed its example. He will likely call a party congress during the first three months of 2007. The three biggest non-MVR pro-government parties have not yet fully committed to joining the PSUV, but the Chavez government is reminding them that they are dispensable. Chavez is likely to use the PSUV as a vehicle for concentrating even more power in his hands and for quashing intra-government dissent. End Summary.

MVR Out; PSUV In

12. (U) President Hugo Chavez reiterated December 15 that he will combine -- and replace -- his Fifth Republic Movement party (MVR) and numerous other pro-Chavez parties to form a new single socialist party early in 2007. Chavez made the announcement during a televised speech at a ceremony recognizing his national campaign team and local campaign leaders. Reflecting on his December 3 electoral victory, Chavez told his supporters that "I have seen some out there saying that their party secured so many votes. Don't fall for lies, those votes are for Chavez." Chavez added that pro-government parties are "free" to remain independent, but those that do will not be considered part of the government. His subsequent statement have reconfirmed his commitment to creating a single pro-government party this year.

13. (U) Chavez has provided few details about the new single pro-government party. Even the name of the party is to be determined. The pro-government daily "Vea" currently refers to the proposed party as the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela, PSUV), but BRV officials have also referred to it as the Single Socialist Party and the Unitary Socialist Party. Chavez

promised his supporters that the party would be built from the bases up, and not be the "sum of the same faces." He has asked that the leaders of his nation-wide electoral machine remain in place in their "battalions" and "squadrons" to assist with building the new party.

14. (U) Communications Minister and National MVR Coordinator Willian Lara announced the dissolution of the MVR Party on December 18. Lara said that all the goods and properties pertaining to MVR would be transferred to the new Socialist Party of Venezuela, once the single "revolutionary" party is legally constituted. Chavez is expected to call for a party congress sometime in the first three months of 2007 to launch the new party. He told his MVR supporters on December 15 that he wanted the new party to focus not just on elections, but also on the "battle of ideas" and the "socialist project."

An Undefined Proposal

15. (C) Chavez has not specified exactly when or how he plans to form the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV). He told the host of the pro-government "Contragolpe" talk show January 3 that political parties need to be the "vehicle for the construction of socialism, and not the obstacles that they are today." Chavez also continues to repeat the need for greater "internal democracy." There is growing speculation that Chavez will call for some form of "ratification of the bases" to try to give the PSUV leadership popular legitimacy. Nevertheless, we expect Chavez will hand-pick the principal leaders of the PSUV (in the same manner that he dominated the MVR) and that any party elections would rubber stamp his selections.

16. (U) In an "El Universal" interview published December 17, MVR Director General Francisco Ameliach noted that the MVR

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was a successful nation-wide "electoral organization," but suggested Chavez wants the new PSUV to be more. Specifically, Ameliach said the new PSUV should provide greater "ideological formation" and impose more party discipline and internal controls. Ameliach, who headed Chavez' re-election campaign, said he retains the registration of some five million Chavez supporters that can be used to "impart ideology" and for "social work."

The Bandwagon Effect

17. (SBU) In the wake of the dissolution of the MVR, a number of minor parties that supported Chavez during the December 3 election on their own party ticket announced their imminent dissolution and intention to join a United Socialist Party of Venezuela. Lina Ron, the firebrand President of the Popular Venezuelan Unity party (UPV), published a December 19 op-ed endorsing the creation of a single "revolutionary" party, noting "Who am I to put conditions on the second liberator of my country?" The same day, she called a press conference and announced the dissolution of UPV and her readiness to form a "socialist, Bolivarian, nationalist, patriotic, anti-imperialist, and humanist" party.

18. (SBU) Other minor pro-Chavez parties, such as the Electoral Movement of the People (MEP) and the Revolutionary Middle Class Party, quickly announced their intention to follow suit. By the end of 2006, at least 11 of the 23 parties that supported Chavez and his MVR during the December 3 presidential election pledged to dissolve and join Chavez' proposed single "revolutionary" party. None of these parties passed the two percent electoral threshold in the presidential election for automatic placement on subsequent ballots and would have had to collect signatures to retain their status as viable political parties.

The Hold-Outs

¶9. (SBU) Patria Para Todos (PPT), PODEMOS, and the Communist Party (CPV), the most popular pro-Chavez parties outside of the MVR, have all deferred decisions on whether to join a single "revolutionary" party, citing the need to consult with their party bases. PPT separated from the Radical Cause (Causa R) party in 1997, and PODEMOS separated from the Movement Toward Socialism (MAS) party in 2003. Both Causa R and MAS are opposition parties that supported the 2006 presidential candidacy of Manuel Rosales. All three pro-government parties managed to poll more than the two percent threshold for maintaining political party status. PODEMOS and PPT are reportedly planning party conferences to discuss the idea later in January. The Communist Party indicates it will convoke an special party conference in early March to debate the same. MVR DG Ameliach told "El Universal" that he had already spoken to leaders in all three parties and that all agree on the need to "form a single force." He added that their differences are confined to how to implement such an idea.

¶10. (C) While stressing that all pro-Chavez parties are "free" to accept or turn down Chavez' "invitation" to join a new United Socialist Party of Venezuela, government pressure on the hold-outs is starting to build. MVR National Assembly deputy Carlos Escarra recently warned that pro-Chavez parties better get on board soon, or they will "miss the train." UPV President Lina Ron urged other pro-Chavez parties "to hurry up because the door may shut on you." The pro-government daily "Vea" has run numerous editorials in support of the formation of the PSUV. A post-election "Vea" editorial stressed that MVR won 70 percent of the Chavez vote, compared to just six percent for PODEMOS, four percent for PPT, and two percent for the PCV. A January 4 "Vea" editorial urges leaders in those parties to show "political maturity" and put themselves above "personal positions, sterile doctrines, and small ambitions."

Comment

¶11. (C) After winning the December 3 presidential election by a wide margin, Chavez is in a solid position to impose what is essentially an MVR hostile take-over of the smaller

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pro-government parties. We expect almost all such parties will eventually opt to join a United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) in the hope of retaining some prospect of influence -- and spoils -- within the BRV. The alternative is to occupy what would be political purgatory between the government and opposition. Ironically, Chavez may succeed in eradicating the Communist Party of Venezuela (PCV), something Venezuelan military dictators never succeeded in doing. At the same time, Chavez appears predisposed to adopt models of party discipline and ideology that may well make former PCV members feel quite at home in the soon-to-formed PSUV.

¶12. (C) While Chavez is not only taking on a political project that he may not really need, it is also one that may prove difficult to implement. The Venezuelan president has far more experience as an institution-destroyer as a means to enhance his control of power than he does as an institution-builder. Politically, he has relied principally on his charismatic, populist appeal and the tools and resources of government, not the MVR party. Consequently, the MVR party, while a solid electoral machine, is widely perceived to lack both the structure and infrastructure that characterize fully functioning parties, including smaller pro-Chavez parties like the PPT and PCV. It may prove to be an operational challenge to graft the MVR's election

apparatus with the existing and well-established infrastructure of other pro-Chavez parties. The extent Chavez is seriously interested in constituting a political entity that could function in any meaningful way without him also remains an open question.

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